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Note verbale dated 20 July 1999 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to request the admission of Chile as a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Chile is a country with a long-standing and recognized tradition of providing asylum in the Latin American region and since the creation of the Office of the High Commissioner it has attached special importance to the universal work carried out by UNHCR for the protection and promotion of the rights of refugees.

In this connection, as a State Member of the United Nations and a party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, Chile is continuing actively to contribute to these activities, prompted by the concern to ensure full compliance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations resolutions on refugees, as well as the provisions of the above-mentioned international instruments, to which it assigns special significance.

Thus, in keeping with its traditional posture, the Government of Chile, reiterating once again its commitment to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to implementation of the international conventions on the protection of and provision of assistance to refugees, and to the goal of strengthening international solidarity in the search for durable solutions,

entered into an agreement in January 1999 with UNHCR for the resettlement of refugees in Chile which includes a first project to resettle a group of families from the former Yugoslavia. This project is under way and is due to be completed in the course of 1999.

In this same spirit, the Government of Chile wishes to pursue its cooperation and establish closer links with UNHCR, for which purpose it considers that its membership of the UNHCR Executive Committee would be appropriate and necessary.

Accordingly, the Government of Chile would be most grateful if the Secretary-General of the United Nations would transmit this request to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration.

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SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS

Letter dated 22 July 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

On behalf of the 50 delegations listed below, I have the honour to request that the attached joint statement be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 under agenda item 14 (h):

Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mongolia, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

(Signed) Margaret Liang
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

GE.99-64755 (E)

Annex

Joint statement on the question of the death penalty submitted by Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe

We would like to place on record our disassociation from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1999/61 on the question of the death penalty for the following reasons:

(a) There is no international consensus that capital punishment should be abolished. Article 6, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes". This view was reflected in the joint statement contained in document E/1998/95, in which 54 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/8. This view was also reflected in the joint statement contained in document E/1997/106, in which 34 delegations disassociated themselves from a similar Commission on Human Rights resolution (resolution 1997/12) and the joint letter contained in document E/CN.4/1998/156, in which 51 delegations expressed their reservations prior to the adoption of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/8.

(b) Capital punishment has often been characterized as a human rights issue in the context of the right of the convicted prisoner to life. However, this must be weighed against the rights of the victims and the right of the community to live in peace and security.

(c) The question of whether to retain or abolish the death penalty should be carefully studied by each State, taking fully into account the sentiments of the people and the state of crime and criminal policy. It is inappropriate to make a universal decision on this question or to propose such action in the forum of an international organization.